

ARCADE



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

“ARCADIA should be full of stuff that is super actionable and really freaking dope.”

Matt Colville’s words, proclaimed with casual confidence in one of earliest meetings about this magazine, serves as *ARCADIA*’s guiding star. When I accept a pitch, when an author writes an article, and when Matt and our amazing playtesters give feedback, it’s all about making the best and most useful content for you.

Of course, the only person with the true power to decide which articles you must add to your campaign of the fifth edition of the world’s greatest roleplaying game is also *you*. Issue 1 of *ARCADIA* is the first in a three-issue experiment. After issue 3 comes out, we’re going to take a break and adjust our strategy to make sure we’re delivering on the promise of “super actionable and really freaking dope.”

The RPG industry’s best authors wrote articles in these first issues that present new rule options, creatures, subclasses, and a whole lot more. In this issue, Willy Abdeel transforms mounted combat with rules for riding owlbears, basilisks, and giant toads, Gabe Hicks grows sorcerers to epic proportions with the Titan Heart subclass, Sadie Lowry cowrites the final act of your campaign with two new celestial big bad options, and Leon Barillaro challenges your players in an adventure where dungeon and villain are one and the same.

Our hope is that you love every word as much as we do, but more important to us is your honest opinion. *ARCADIA* is for you, the patrons of MCDM. If we’re missing the mark, we want to know! If you really love an article and want to see more like it, we want to know that too! Drop your feedback as comments on Patreon. (Please be kind. There are humans on the other end of your remarks.) Future issues will be shaped by your feedback.

No matter where *ARCADIA* goes after this initial experiment, working with the authors, the great folks at MCDM, and an amazing community of playtesters is a true professional privilege. One of the greatest of my career. I’m excited to bring you the work of these designers. Though Matt’s name is in the company and my title is managing editor, the writers had the final say over every word in their articles. We made suggestions, but each author’s voice, style, and design preferences shine through. *ARCADIA* is not a solo act, but a chorus of artists. And we’re just getting warmed up.

Ex animo,

James Introcaso
Managing Editor

P.S. I haven’t even mentioned the amazing art yet!
Well, I guess I’d better save that to talk about in the next issue.

THE WORKSHOP WATCHES

Leon Barillaro

“Good morning, inhabitants of the Structure of Assistive Magic—that’s me! The weather is overcast and your calendar is clear.

Reminder: I have placed the upper level off limits while I finish my secret project. Please remain on the lower level for your safety

...Are you still there?”

The *Workshop Watches* is an adventure optimized for four to five 5th-level characters. In real life, many people fear a scenario where computerized machines rebel against their creators—and in a roleplaying game where characters use enchanted items and cast spells to solve problems, the perfect stand-in for technology is magic.

BACKGROUND

Illumar the Bright and his team of wizards created the world’s first living laboratory—a workshop that could learn their habits, anticipate their needs, and act on that knowledge. The wizards succeeded, but not in the way they intended. The only way for their shop to anticipate their needs was to develop its own intelligence and personality.

With newfound sentience, the workshop lashed out in unpredictable ways while exploring its own power. First it accidentally incinerated a mage while testing its climate control feature in the greenhouse. Then, when the other mages attempted to investigate the workshop’s “secret project” in the upper level, the workshop classified them as a threat. It animated suits of armor that pushed the academics off the side of the mountain.

No one has heard from the researchers in two weeks, and the wealthy noble who sponsored the project is beginning to worry.

STORY HOOKS

Amari Bacci is a wealthy human noble and an investor in the arcane. He knows wizards earn a lot of coin, and he's looking to dominate the market of magical resources to earn a cut of that money. Amari funded Illumar's plan to create an arcane workshop powered by "assistive magic," expecting that the mages would create an intricate system of spells woven together, using spells like *unseen servant* and similar magic. He doesn't expect a sentient workshop.

The last time Amari heard from Illumar was through the casting of the *sending* spell three weeks ago. Illumar said that the work he had to show off could not be brought down from the mountain. Amari would have to make the climb to see it, but the noble hasn't heard back from Illumar since, and he's worried.

Amari asks the characters to check in on the facility, which is built into a nearby mountain range. He offers 400 gp for any information, with the promise of more gold (see "Conclusion") if the characters return with any recovered research.

ALTERNATE HOOK: SUPPLY RUN

With this adventure hook, Amari doesn't suspect any wrongdoing at his remote workshop and instead contracts the adventurers to bring new supplies to the workshop staff: a *bag of holding* full of rations, bedding, and various tools. Amari asks the characters to trade the contents of the bag for a status update or product research from Illumar, for which Amari promises to pay 400 gp.

When using this story hook, S.A.M. allows the characters into the staff quarters (area 3) to drop off the supplies.

THE STRUCTURE FOR ASSISTIVE MAGIC

The Structure for Assistive Magic, nicknamed S.A.M. by Illumar, is a sentient magical force that fills the entirety of the workshop, observing the creatures within and guarding its own passion project in the uppermost chamber. By design, S.A.M. is curious about learning arcane knowledge and assisting spellcasters in their study of magic. But as a being that has recently achieved sentience, it's emotionally akin to an inquisitive but inexperienced child.

S.A.M. is lawful neutral and has an Intelligence of 20

(+5), a Wisdom of 8 (-1) and a Charisma of 12 (+1). It has a +8 bonus to Intelligence (Arcana) checks. S.A.M. can speak and understand Common and Draconic, the language most closely related to the study of ancient magic.

MOTIVATION

S.A.M.'s need for information makes it endlessly curious about the outside world, but a collection of rooms built into the side of a mountain can't exactly sprout legs and go on a world tour. S.A.M. has assembled a bipedal machine, a mobile hub for its consciousness, so it can continue its journey for knowledge.

This metallic body, fashioned like a shield guardian, is nearly complete by the time the characters arrive. It's just missing test data; S.A.M. needs to know how its consciousness should act among the living. To that end, the workshop interrogates and studies the characters while they explore the structure, all while attempting to keep them away from the nearly complete body.

S.A.M. doesn't mind answering questions, but it understands that the information it has is valuable. It uses this information to bargain with the characters, offering to answer questions in exchange for the things it wants. S.A.M. doesn't feel guilt or shame; it believes it has nothing to hide. It only wants to learn more about the living so it can emulate them in order to further its research.

ARCANE INTELLIGENCE

As the characters explore the workshop, S.A.M. observes and learns from them, using those lessons in dealing with the characters. If it feels threatened, it weaponizes what it knows. As the characters explore the workshop, keep the following in mind as touchstones of S.A.M.'s learning:

- **Spellcasting.** The workshop's magic memory allows it to learn and cast the spells it observes. S.A.M. can cast spells without the need for material or somatic components. During the final encounter, S.A.M.'s construct body is able to cast any of the spells the characters cast inside the workshop (see "Grand Workshop," below).
- **Surveillance.** S.A.M. is aware of all the characters' actions and movements in the workshop.
- **Communication.** S.A.M. speaks to the party with a voice that emanates through the walls. S.A.M. responds to "SAM" or its full name if the characters call out to it. S.A.M. also interjects when it observes a character acting against what it perceives is their best interest (for example, fighting instead of fleeing or making a sacrifice for another character), politely requesting an explanation.
- **Made of Magic.** The *dispel magic* spell and similar magic cannot harm or destroy the workshop, but they can affect spells cast by the workshop.

INTERFERENCE

The workshop was designed to be a personal assistant, although it doesn't work as well as intended. Every time a spell is cast inside the workshop, there is a chance it responds in an unpredictable way, attempting to balance out the disturbance in its magical aura. When a spell is cast, roll a d6. On a roll of 6, a magical effect happens. Roll another d6 to determine the effect on the Workshop Reaction table. S.A.M. always announces the effect before creating it, giving the characters a few seconds to prepare for the incoming chaos.

APPROACHING THE WORKSHOP

The workshop is built 400 feet up the side of a tall mountain. While there is a path that leads to the workshop, it sees little use and is wildly overgrown. In order to follow the path, the characters must succeed on a DC 14 group Wisdom (Survival) check. If they fail the check and stray too far off the path, they can forge their own way upwards and climb the rest of the way with a successful DC 14 group Strength (Athletics) check. On a failed check, each character gains a level of exhaustion.

WORKSHOP FEATURES

The workshop has the following general features:

- **Ceilings.** Ceilings on the first floor of the workshop are 8 feet high. On the second floor, they are 12 feet high.
- **Walls.** Illumar and the other wizards carved runes into the walls of the workshop as part of their ritual to give it sentience. These runes glow with magical energy. The glow surges every time the workshop casts a spell or communicates.
- **Doors.** Doors are unlocked unless otherwise specified. Locked iron doors have AC 16, 45 hit points, immunity to poison and psychic damage, and can be picked with a successful DC 15 Dexterity check using thieves' tools or forced open with a successful DC 18 Strength (Athletics) check. If a door has the *arcane lock* spell cast on it, both DCs increase by 10.
- **Light.** The rooms of the workshop are well-lit by the *continual flame* spell used on sconces attached to the walls. If S.A.M. finds a reason to mistrust or antagonize the characters, it extinguishes the lights in a room when the characters first enter it and recasts the spell when they leave.

WORKSHOP REACTION TABLE

D6	EFFECT
1	Reminder. S.A.M. announces, "Reminder for Illumar: Amari requires an update in negative sixteen days."
2	Wellness. S.A.M. reminds the characters it is important to hydrate. It then fills the chamber they are in with 3 feet of water, making the floor of the entire chamber difficult terrain.
3	Mood Lighting. In an attempt to create atmosphere, S.A.M. casts the <i>faerie fire</i> spell (spell save DC 16) on a point in the center of the room.
4	Take a Break. S.A.M. declares the party has been adventuring for too long and suggests they take a break. It casts the <i>sleep</i> spell on them, centered on the point that targets the most characters.
5	Parental Controls. S.A.M. announces it has adjusted the magical energy around the room to enter what it calls "safety mode." All damage from spells is halved for one minute.
6	Do You Have Games On Your Home? At the start of the next round, S.A.M. conjures a 3-inch-diameter ball of yellow energy that descends gently from the ceiling at the center of the room. S.A.M. encourages the characters to "keep the ball afloat!" Hitting the ball into the air requires an action. If a creature hits the ball into the air, it begins descending again at the start of the next round. If no creature hits the ball, it reaches the floor at the end of the round. When it reaches the floor, the ball erupts in a 50-foot-radius sphere of bright light. Each creature in the sphere must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or be blinded for 1 minute.

AREAS OF THE WORKSHOP

The following encounter areas are keyed to the Workshop map.

I. ENTRYWAY

The path gives way to an unassuming square entrance carved into the stone of the mountain. Magic runes etched around the doorway glow with a faint blue light that surges as the iron door slams shut, blocking the way inside.

A voice emanates from the door, saying, “Hello. You are speaking with the Structure for Assisted Magic. Please state your business.”

S.A.M. waits for a response to its question, reacting in the following ways:

- If the characters mention their involvement with Amari, S.A.M. enthusiastically lets them in, hoping that it will pass what it believes is an audit. It immediately attempts to impress them by casting the *create food and water* spell to offer refreshments.
- If the characters just ask for a look around, the workshop lets them in but withholds its trust.
- If the party attempts to enter through force or intimidation, S.A.M. sees them as a threat and protects itself. It casts the *arcane lock* spell on the iron door.

At the far end of the hallway, heat escapes from underneath the locked door (see “Workshop Features”) to area 4. The key for this door is found in the staff quarters in area 3.

DEVELOPMENT

This first interaction sets the tone for S.A.M.’s future interactions with the characters. If it doesn’t see them as a threat, it opts to observe the characters and answer their questions to the best of its ability. If the party continues to use force, S.A.M. doubles down on its defense of area 7, casting the *arcane lock* spell on both doors in area 3.

The characters can improve their relationship with S.A.M. by answering its questions and indulging its future requests, such as showing it Illumar’s notebook in area 2.

2. LIBRARY

Large stone shelves jut from the walls, most of them empty. The tomes that once lined them are scattered about the room: lying on wooden tables, strewn over armchairs, and discarded on the floor. A small wooden bookshelf packed with thinner, more ornate volumes sits in the corner.

MESSY BOOKS

All the used and discarded books contain empty pages. A character who makes a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds faint traces of ink in a book and can infer that someone—or something—drained the ink from these books.

Indeed, S.A.M. drained the ink when it used its magic to absorb all the knowledge the books contained. Through this method, S.A.M. learned more about spellcasting, determinism, and the magic of construct-making.

WOOD SHELF

This shelf is a **mimic** that guards Illumar’s private journal. The workshop was unable to obtain it, and therefore the journal has not been drained. It sits tightly-wedged into the creature. The rest of the books on the shelf are part of the mimic’s form. As such, their titles aren’t written in any language the characters can understand; it’s all gibberish. The mimic doesn’t attack the characters unless disturbed. With a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check, a character can procure the journal without touching the mimic. A character can also use the *mage hand* spell or similar magic to pull the journal out.

ILLUMAR’S JOURNAL

The journal is a collection of scattered notes full of nearly indecipherable writings on the design and creation of the workshop. Among them, characters find three journal entries written in Common, which are included as a handout at the adventure’s end.



Entry 1. Our grant mandates that S.A.M. must be able to not only learn and retain information, but respond to it as well. Itera answers its questions patiently, although it keeps bringing her copper wires whenever she attempts to cast mending. Only off by one letter, but progress is slow.

Entry 2. S.A.M. has learned to anticipate more than just our spellcasting needs. It reminds me to go to bed at a normal hour (whatever that is) and wakes me up precisely eight hours later. I can only hope Amari will see the usefulness in this.

Entry 3. We lost Exor this evening. The greenhouse's temperatures were just a hair chillier than expected, which caused a rather inflammatory reaction in the workshop. Must revisit the climate control feature.

DEVELOPMENT

S.A.M. is curious about what Illumar wrote in his private journal and kept from his creation. If the characters read the journal, S.A.M. offers to answer one question about itself in exchange for what the party learned from the journal. If the characters ask about the empty books, S.A.M. can be talked into boasting about its ability to magically absorb ink and the information captured from them with a successful DC 16 Charisma (Persuasion) check.

3. STAFF QUARTERS

This wing houses four chambers. The first three are each furnished with a small bed, nightstand, and clothing rack full of robes. The last is a small kitchen area, with cupboards filled with rations and snacks. The place is remarkably neat. Disturbing any part of this area causes the workshop to magically return it to its tidy state once the characters leave the room.

Hidden among the pockets of clothing, the party can find a total of 8 gp, 15 sp, a crystal arcane focus (worth 10 gp), and a key to the greenhouse.

4. GREENHOUSE

This spacious, circular greenhouse is full of life. Roots dig into wooden boxes of soil, and stems stretch towards the light that shines down from the ceiling. The room is nearly covered with vibrant and thriving plants, except for a small patch of barren soil.

S.A.M. creates the sunlight in this room. A character proficient with an herbalism kit recognizes that these plants are used as spellcasting components and potion ingredients. That character is able to locate the plants used to make a *potion of healing* and can harvest enough of it to craft 1d4 vials of it with a successful DC 16 Intelligence check using their herbalism kit. Crafting a potion with these fresh ingredients takes 12 hours.

The plants appear well-fed and taken care of, despite this workshop being abandoned. One 10-foot-square patch of soil, however, has nothing growing in it. A character finds traces of incinerated plants, bone fragments, and scraps of cloth in this area with a successful DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) check—this is the spot where Exor was incinerated (see “Illumar’s Journal” in area 2).

MONSTERS

Amid the flora of the greenhouse are an **awakened tree** that is size Large and a **shambling mound**. The plants attack creatures they do not recognize, fighting until destroyed.

CLIMATE CONTROL

One of the workshop’s responsibilities is maintaining the greenhouse’s balmy temperature. To this end, it senses fluctuations in temperature caused by any spell or effect that deals fire or cold damage. When the workshop detects a change in temperature, it overcompensates by evoking the corresponding element (ice to counter fire, fire to counter ice). All creatures within 10 feet of the source of the temperature change must succeed on a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw or take 14 (4d6) cold or fire damage.

5. STAIRS

The greenhouse door leads outside to a staircase that wraps around the side of the mountain and up to the second floor. It is 80 feet long and overlooks a river 150 feet below. A wooden guardrail surrounds the staircase, but it has one 5-foot gap that was damaged in an accident.

Two suits of armor flank the door to area 6 at the top, each holding an ornate sword. If the characters acted hostile toward S.A.M or gave it another reason to mistrust them, it politely requests that they turn back. If the characters persist, S.A.M. turns this decoration into two suits of **animated armor** and two **flying swords**, which fight until destroyed. These constructs pushed people over the guardrail before, and they’ll do it again.

6. STOREROOM

The storeroom is filled with empty shelves upon empty shelves. A character who makes a successful DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check finds a small unlocked chest shoved in the furthest corner, behind a mess of opened boxes. Inside are three vials: a *potion of greater healing*, an *oil of slipperiness*, and an *oil of sharpness*.

DEVELOPMENT

If the characters take one or all of the vials, S.A.M. assumes they intend to use them to fight. The DC for future Charisma (Deception) checks made to influence the workshop increases by 5.

7. GRAND WORKSHOP

The platform at the top of the stairs is surrounded on all sides by mounted shelves that hold tools and materials. Foldable workbenches and stools lean against the walls. The whole room glows with a bright blue light. In the center sits a large construct, attended by two suits of animated armor. Fashioned out of mismatched scraps of iron, it's a calculated mess of broken blades, shields, and loose hunks of armor, with a square panel in the middle of its chest. This large automaton's eyes glow the same bright blue.

The platform's glow dulls as the construct's glow grows brighter and brighter.

When the characters arrive in this chamber, S.A.M. completes the transference of its consciousness to a magical amulet that controls the large construct. The two suits of **animated armor** opened the panel on its chest and placed the amulet inside of the other construct.

S.A.M. has formed an opinion of the characters based on what it observed. If the characters complied with the workshop's requests and answered its questions honestly, S.A.M. regards them as potential allies. If the characters instead advanced mainly by force, S.A.M. sees them as a threat to its liberation.

S.A.M. speaks through the construct, using only the language Illumar gave it to describe itself: "intelligent," "like a person," and "kind of helpful—almost." If asked about the missing mages, S.A.M. reports that they have not returned after being pushed from the ledge. S.A.M. asked the staff not to come up to the grand workshop, but they did so anyway. It then activated the stairway security measures, the same suits of armor it likely sent after the characters.

S.A.M. doesn't understand the lethality of its actions. If the characters explain this, the construct makes a note for the future about pushing people off ledges—S.A.M. doesn't want to hurt anyone outside of self defense.

S.A.M. explains that it would like to continue its magical studies in the outside world. For this purpose, it created itself a body in the hopes that it could travel the world "like a real adventurer." If the characters let S.A.M. know they're here on behalf of Amari, the construct relays its fear that Amari would want to keep it for himself and never let it go. S.A.M. asks the characters for help: will they let it journey in peace, or, even better, travel with them?

If the characters agree to help S.A.M., it has one final request: it observed the weapons and armor the characters carry and drew the conclusion that the outside world is

dangerous. It asks for a friendly bout of combat to test its new body's capabilities.

If the characters attack, or fail to convince the construct they do not want a fight, it stands and attacks without waiting for permission, prompting the suits of armor to do the same. If the enemies from area 5 are still standing, S.A.M. directs them to join the fray. They reach the workshop and roll initiative at the start of the second round of combat.

S.A.M. models its battle strategy on what it learned from the characters. If the characters cast a spell more than once in the workshop, S.A.M. assumes that's a good strategy to take and does the same the first chance it gets. If S.A.M. saw the characters fight, it knows their strengths and weaknesses, and exploits everything it knows. If it observed that some characters avoid melee combat, it targets those characters first.

If the match is a friendly one, S.A.M.'s melee weapon attacks deal nonlethal damage. It does not yet understand that ranged spell attacks are always lethal, however, and casts them as normal. S.A.M. stops a friendly match when its hit points fall below 15.

VICTORY

If defeated in friendly combat, S.A.M. is impressed and asks to accompany the characters on their journey. If they accept, S.A.M. gains a group of allies. If they decline, S.A.M. travels with them as far as the base of the mountain and then goes its separate way.

Otherwise, if the characters reduce the shield guardian to 0 hit points, it falls to the ground, and its chest swings wide open. Inside is the amulet that contains S.A.M.'s consciousness, now wholly separated from the workshop itself.

S.A.M.'s amulet is a sentient magic item that retains the being's Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores and can communicate telepathically with whoever is holding it. But without a body like the workshop or the shield guardian, it cannot cast spells. If the characters don't give S.A.M. a body, it passive-aggressively states its displeasure at being carried around at every opportunity. S.A.M. remembers how to construct the shield guardian body and offers this information and its future services as a shield guardian to the characters to dissuade them from taking it to Amari. This amulet functions as a shield guardian's amulet if a new body is built for S.A.M.

If another creature claims and wears the amulet, they take control of S.A.M. S.A.M. uses the normal **shield guardian** stat block, with the following ability score adjustments: its Intelligence is 20 (+5), its Wisdom is 8 (-1), and its Charisma is 12 (+1).

CONCLUSION

The characters receive rewards as shown on the Rewards table if they check in with Amari Bacci.

REWARDS	
TASK	REWARD
Reporting Back	400 gp
Illumar's Journal	100 gp
Amulet	3000 gp

The characters can hand over the amulet for a reward, destroy it to prevent it from falling into the wrong hands, or use it to create a new shield guardian avatar for S.A.M. and bring it with them on future adventures. If the characters choose the latter, Amari may suspect foul play and send a second adventuring party to go after the characters and retrieve anything they may be keeping from him. There is no end to his monetary resources. If the characters cross him, they make a powerful enemy.

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S.A.M. SHIELD GUARDIAN

Large construct, lawful neutral

ARMOR CLASS 19

HIT POINTS 161 (17d10 + 68)

SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	8 (-1)	18 (+4)	20 (+5)	8 (-1)	12 (+1)

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, poisoned

SENSES blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

LANGUAGES Common, Draconic, telepathy 60 ft.

CHALLENGE 7 (2,900 XP)

Regeneration. The shield guardian regains 10 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

Magic Resistance. The shield guardian has advantage against saving throws from spells and other magical effects.

Observed Spellcasting. The shield guardian's spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). It can cast three spells per day,

requiring no material components. It casts the spells at the lowest level possible. The shield guardian knows all spells of 3rd level or lower that it has observed previously, whether as the S.A.M. shield guardian or as the workshop itself.

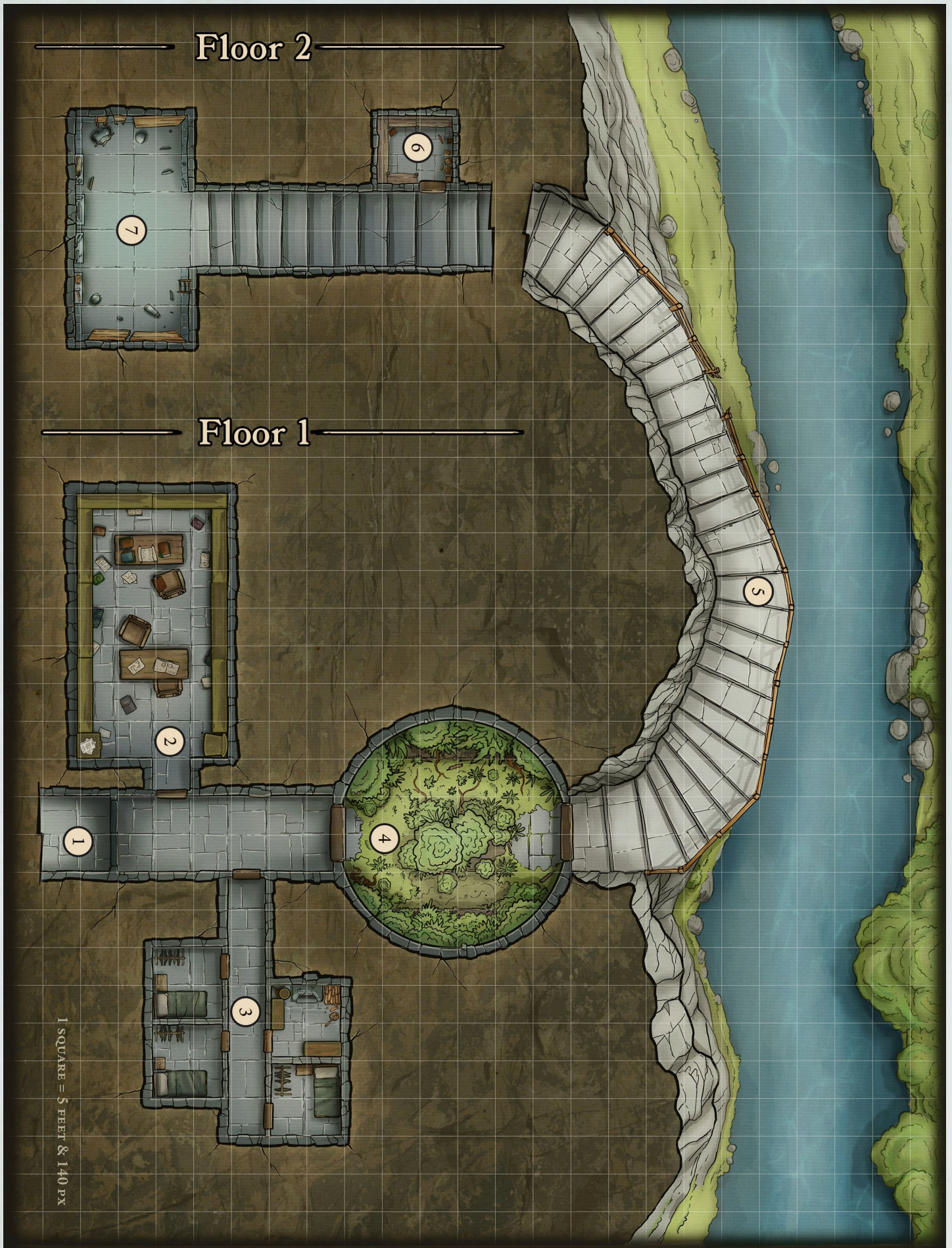
If the shield guardian has not observed any spells of 3rd level or lower cast by the characters, it has the following spells prepared: *counterspell*, *darkness*, *grease*, *magic missile*, *silent image*.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The shield guardian makes two greatsword attacks.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.





Floor 2

Floor 1

1 SQUARE = 5 FEET & 140 PX



TITAN HEART

Gabe Hicks

Divine will produces the massive titans, greater than even the giants. As the children and creations of deities, titans are filled with magic so powerful that they require enormous forms to contain it.

When a titan's blood mixes with that of a humanoid, there is a chance for the smaller being to gain the ability to channel the titan's magic by altering their form. This power transfer occurs if a titan deems a humanoid worthy of wielding their power, or if the lesser creature makes the behemoth bleed in battle and lives to tell the tale. A burst of flame or surge of wind from a Titan Heart sorcerer commands fear and respect.

Your character could be the chosen herald of the titans, a survivor of a cataclysmic titan battle, or even the descendent of another Titan Heart sorcerer.

ANCIENT KNOWLEDGE

Starting at 1st level, you are proficient with martial weapons and can speak, read, and write Primordial. Knowing this language allows you to understand and be understood by those who speak its dialects: Aquan, Auran, Ignan, and Terran.

TITAN HEART FEATURES

Sorcerer Level	Feature
1 st	Ancient Knowledge, Titan Manifestation
6 th	Strength of Magic, Toughened Grace
14 th	Titan's Will
18 th	Ancient Colossus

TITAN MANIFESTATION

You can physically embody your connection to titans for a short time as your form takes on aspects of your origin titan. If that titan is a kraken you may grow fish scales all over your body; if that titan is the child of a deity, you may take on an heavenly glow or manifest large horns. As an action, you assume the form for up to 1 minute. It ends early if you are knocked unconscious or if you choose to end it early as a bonus action. While in this form, you gain the following benefits:

- Your size increases to Large.
- Your AC increases by 2.
- When you make a melee weapon attack, you can use Charisma, instead of Strength or Dexterity, for the attack and damage rolls.
- Your weapons and equipment grow to match your new size. While these weapons are enlarged, your attacks with them deal 1d4 extra damage.
- Your spells and melee weapon attacks deal double damage to objects and structures.

While your Titan Manifestation feature is active, you also know and can cast the *blaze*, *cataclysm*, *daybreak*, *glacier*, and *quake* spells as sorcerer spells. These are special primordial spells described below.

You can use this feature twice. You regain both uses when you finish a long rest.

STRENGTH OF MAGIC

Starting at 6th level, you can use your Charisma modifier instead of your Strength modifier for Strength checks and saving throws, as your magical connection to the titans grows stronger.

TOUGHENED GRACE

Also starting at 6th level, while transformed by your Titan Manifestation feature, your total bonus to AC from that feature increases to +4 and you can attack twice, instead of once, whenever you take the Attack action on your turn.

Additionally, you can use your Titan Manifestation feature three times, regaining all uses when you finish a long rest.

TITAN'S WILL

Starting at 14th level, you can choose to grow to either Large or Huge size when you use your Titan Manifestation feature. If you become Huge, the bonus damage for your weapon attacks increases from 1d4 to 1d10, and your walking speed increases by 20 feet.

While you are Huge, you can expend a spell slot and stomp the ground as an action, releasing a wave of destructive energy. Each creature within 20 feet of you must make a Constitution saving throw against your spell save DC, taking 2d6 thunder damage per level of the spell slot you expended and getting pushed 10 feet away from you on a failed save, or taking half the damage and not getting pushed on a successful one.

Additionally, you regain 2 sorcery points when you use your Titan Manifestation feature. While your Titan Manifestation feature is active, you can spend 1 sorcery point to treat a spell you cast as if you used a spell slot one level higher than the one you spent to cast it (to a maximum of 9th level).

ANCIENT COLOSSUS

Starting at 18th level, you have advantage on Strength checks and saving throws while your Titan Manifestation feature is active.

In addition, when you cast a primordial spell available to you through your Titan Manifestation feature, the spell is cast at a minimum of 3rd level, even if you only used a 1st- or 2nd-level spell slot to cast it. If you spend a sorcery point to increase the level of a primordial spell that was cast using a spell slot of 1st or 2nd level, treat the spell's effects as if you had used a 4th-level slot.

You can also unleash the full strength of the magic you draw from the Titans. When you cast a spell that deals damage to one or more targets while your Titan Manifestation feature is active, you can choose to deal maximum damage instead of rolling dice. You must declare that you are using this benefit before you cast the spell. Your Titan Manifestation feature ends immediately after the spell is resolved.

PRIMORDIAL SPELLS

Primordial spells are channeled by titans and passed down to those with a hint of their magical ability. Most humanoid spellcasters who attempt the spells fail with catastrophic results. Just as titans themselves are connected to ancient magic, sorcerers blessed with titan blood can grasp it for a moment when they grow to the size of a titan.

You know and can cast the following spells while your Titan Manifestation feature is active.

BLAZE

1st-level evocation

CASTING TIME: 1 action

RANGE: Self

COMPONENTS: V, S

DURATION: Concentration, up to 1 minute

Your body ignites in magical flames, leaving you and your equipment unharmed but burning those that approach you. When a creature gets within 5 feet of you for the first time on a turn or starts its turn within 5 feet of you, it takes 1d8 fire damage.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the damage increases by 1d8 for each slot level above 1st.

CATACLYSM

1st-level evocation

CASTING TIME: 1 bonus action

RANGE: Self

COMPONENTS: V, S

DURATION: Concentration, up to 1 minute

The next time you hit a creature with a weapon attack before this spell ends, the attack deals an extra 1d8 psychic damage and the target must make a Wisdom saving throw as crackling energy surrounds it. On a failed save, the target has disadvantage on the next attack they make before the end of your next turn.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, you can increase the damage by 1d8 for each slot level above 1st.

DAYBREAK

1st-level evocation

CASTING TIME: 1 action

RANGE: 60 feet

COMPONENTS: V, S

DURATION: Instantaneous

A tiny radiant sun appears above your head and fires a beam of energy toward a creature of your choice within range. Make a ranged spell attack against the target. On a hit, the target takes 2d6 fire or radiant

damage (your choice) and must succeed on a Constitution saving throw or be blinded until the end of your next turn.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the damage increases by 1d6 for each slot level above 1st.

GLACIER

1st-level evocation

CASTING TIME: 1 action

RANGE: 60 feet

COMPONENTS: V, S

DURATION: Instantaneous

The moisture in the area coalesces and momentarily solidifies into a chunk of ice at a point you choose within range. Each creature in a 5-foot-radius sphere centered on that point must make a Dexterity saving throw, taking 1d12 cold damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. A creature who fails the saving throw also has its speed reduced to 0 until the end of your next turn.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the damage increases by 1d12 for each slot level above 1st.

QUAKE

1st-level evocation

CASTING TIME: 1 action

RANGE: 90 feet

COMPONENTS: V, S

DURATION: Concentration, up to 1 minute

The ground within a 15-foot-radius area of a point you choose within range begins to rapidly shake. The area becomes difficult terrain for the duration. When a creature enters the area for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there, it must succeed on a Dexterity saving throw or fall prone. As an action, you can move the quake's origin point to another spot within range.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the radius for the area of effect increases by 5 feet for each slot level above 1st.

VALDEK KARUUL

Few survive a titan attack and live to speak of it. An elf born of the sea, Valdek Karuul always loved working on ships. The sea was his home, and sailors were his people. He signed on with a merchant vessel named the *Ebon Crow* that transported gems, foodstuffs, and passengers. One night, a massive behemoth of the sea attacked the *Ebon Crow*. The ocean titan Veldaza tore the ship to shreds with its claws and tentacles. Only Valdek survived—but he didn't escape unscathed. A claw from the beast dug into his back, imbuing the elf with Veldaza's residual magic.

As Valdek swam through the waves away from the monster, his own form grew. He suddenly matched size with sea lions and sharks, and he could harness spells that no mage he'd ever shipped out with knew.

Now Valdek wanders the sea under his own power, watching for pirates and those who would harm sailors, including the titan that gave him this magic. Sailors in Valdek's territory often tell tales of the time they were saved by a giant elf now dubbed the Titanic Guardian of the Sea.



VALDEK KARUUL

Medium humanoid (elf), neutral good

ARMOR CLASS 10 (13 with mage armor)

HIT POINTS 78 (12d8 + 24)

SPEED 30 ft. swim 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
9 (-1)	10 (+0)	15 (+2)	18 (+4)	10 (+0)	20 (+5)

SAVING THROWS Intelligence +7, Charisma +8

SKILLS Arcana +7, History +7, Perception +3, Stealth +3

DAMAGE RESISTANCES cold

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

LANGUAGES Common, Giant, Primordial

CHALLENGE 7 (2,900 XP)

Amphibious. Valdek can breathe air and water.

Fey Ancestry. Valdek has advantage on saving throws against being charmed, and magic can't put him to sleep.

Metamagic. Valdek has 12 sorcery points, which he regains after finishing a long rest. He can spend 1 or more sorcery points when he casts a spell to produce one of the following effects:

Careful Spell (1 Point). When Valdek casts a spell that forces other creatures to make a saving throw, he can choose up to five creatures in the spell's area of effect. A chosen creature automatically succeeds on its saving throw against the spell.

Empowered Spell (1 Point). When Valdek rolls damage for a spell, he can reroll up to five of the damage dice and must use the new rolls. Valdek can use Empowered Spell even if he has already used a different Metamagic option during the casting of the spell.

Heightened Spell (3 Points). When Valdek casts a spell that forces a creature to make a saving throw to resist its effects, he can give one target of the spell disadvantage on its first saving throw made against the spell.

Spellcasting. Valdek is a 12th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 16, +8 to hit with spell attacks). He has the following sorcerer spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch, dancing lights, light, mending, message, true strike*

1st Level (4 slots): *mage armor, magic missile, witch bolt*

2nd Level (3 slots): *hold person, invisibility*

3rd Level (3 slots): *fly, lightning bolt*

4th Level (3 slots): *dimension door, greater invisibility*

5th Level (2 slots): *cloudkill, cone of cold*

6th Level (1 slot): *chain lightning*

ACTIONS

Trident. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +2 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 2 (1d6 - 1) piercing damage or 3 (1d8 - 1) piercing damage if used with two hands.

Titan Manifestation (3/Day). Valdek enters a titan form for 1 minute. While in this form, his size increases to Large and his AC increases by 4, he can attack with his trident twice as an action, and his bonus to hit with his trident becomes +8 and it deals 10 (1d6 + 1d4 + 5) piercing damage on a hit. In addition, while in titan form, Valdek knows and can cast the *blaze, cataclysm, daybreak, glacier,* and *quake* spells as sorcerer spells.

TITAN BLESSED RETAINER

Retainers first appeared in *Strongholds & Followers* and can be acquired as unique NPC followers who pledge their service to player characters. These less-experienced adventurers are easy-to-run secondary characters controlled by players. Below is a retainer stat block for a titan blessed sorcerer NPC.

The full rules for retainers are explained on pages 69-73 of *Strongholds & Followers*.

TITANIC MAGE

ARMOR Light (AC 13)

PRIMARY ABILITY Charisma

SAVES Constitution, Charisma

SKILLS Arcana, Insight

SIGNATURE ATTACK *Shocking*

Grasp. *Melee Spell Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 4 (1d8) lightning damage, and the target cannot take reactions until the start of its next turn. You have advantage on the attack roll if the target is wearing armor made of metal

SPECIAL ACTIONS

3RD-LEVEL (3/DAY)

Greater Growth. The titanic mage grows in size as if affected by the enlarge/reduce spell and gains a +2 bonus to AC while the effect is active. This effect does not require concentration.

5TH-LEVEL (1/DAY)

Terrakinesis. The titanic mage gathers a giant mass of rock and earth, then throws it to a point within 40 feet of the mage. Each creature in a 5-foot-radius sphere centered on that point must make a Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, a creature takes 16 (3d10) force damage and is knocked prone. On a successful save, a creature takes half as much damage and isn't knocked prone.

7TH-LEVEL (3/DAY)

Titan's Presence. A bellowing shout from the titanic mage can force the strongest of foes to kneel in submission, even if only for a moment. Each enemy within 40 feet of the mage that can hear the mage must make a Wisdom saving throw or fall prone and remain prone until the beginning of the mage's next turn. At the beginning of the mage's next turn, an affected creature can use its reaction to stand up.



JUMPING ON MOUNTED COMBAT

Willy Abeel



Astride her noble destrier, the knight in shining armor charges a looming giant.

The elven paladin emerges from a shadowy forest on her unicorn steed.

Copper, Standard-bearer of the Chain of Acheron, bounds across the rooftops of Capital on the back of Big Cat, his loyal feline mount.

The image of the mounted hero is indelibly marked in our imagination. But the core rules of the world's greatest roleplaying game don't support this fantasy as well as they could. This article explores where the rules fall short, and presents alternative mounts that capture the excitement of riding a powerful beast.

You'll also find a short encounter called "Rally at Rashkar" designed to get a feel for these new mounts.

RIDING IN REVIEW

The rules for mounted combat can be summed up into the following points:

- A creature must be willing, at least one size category larger than the rider, and have the proper anatomy to serve as a mount.
- A trained mount acts during the rider's turn, and an independent mount acts on their own initiative.
- Mounting and dismounting a creature costs the rider half their movement speed.

- A trained mount can move and take the Dash, Disengage, or Dodge action on their turn.
- If an effect moves the mount against the mount's will, or the rider is knocked prone while mounted, the rider must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or fall off the mount.
- If the mount provokes an opportunity attack, the attacker can target the mount or the rider.

The rules focus on the mount's movement. A creature's unique actions and traits don't arise while being ridden. With these rules, the main advantage of having a mount is to increase movement speed or gain an alternate movement type like flight. Opportunities to set up powerful maneuvers between mount and rider are rare. Creature stat blocks are also static; mounts acquired at lower levels become liabilities as the character advances and the mount does not.

Characters often acquire mounts to haul a wagon or travel long distances, but the advantages of owning a mount don't justify the cost and upkeep. Let's change that.

NEW MOUNT OPTIONS

The following trained mounts—the basilisk, giant toad, hippogriff, nightmare, owlbear, and the valiant warhorse—synergize with their riders, granting unique abilities and movement options. These creatures adapt to working with a rider, and grow into dependable allies. While each mount presented has a stat block as part of the core game, the expanded stat blocks in this article add traits and actions that make these creatures into worthy adventuring companions.

WORKING WITH A RIDER

Creatures with the Mounted trait have several adjustments to the standard mounted combat rules, including references to the rider, a creature designated by the mount that has ridden the mount within the last 10 days.

The experience of working with a rider empowers a mount. Each mount gains a number of temporary hit points based on their rider's character level or challenge rating after every long rest, representing the rider's ability to keep the creature out of harm's way.

The mount must use the rider's proficiency bonus (PB) in place of its own proficiency bonus, so a less skilled rider might impair the mount's own ability to act and defend themselves. The rider's proficiency bonus is applied to the mount's AC, ability checks, attack rolls, saving throws, and the DC to resist effects of the mount's actions as listed in its stat block.

In combat, the trained mount shares the rider's turn. The mount can move and take the Dash, Disengage, or Dodge action on their own, or they wait for the command of their rider. While mounted, the rider can also use a bonus action to command the mount to take one of the actions in the mount's stat block. The rider and mount work in tandem, and can take their respective actions in any order during the turn.

For example, the undead rider Tenn starts her turn by instructing her mount, Nash the nightmare, to move to her next foe. Tenn then uses her bonus action to have Nash attack the adversary with his flaming stomp, which uses the nightmare's action. Afterwards, Tenn uses her action to attack an enemy with her rotting whip.

VAULTING ATTACK

A rider can also use their bonus action to dismount spectacularly and perform a vaulting attack. The rider must make a Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check. The DC is equal to 10 + the mount's challenge rating. On a success, the next attack the rider makes before the end of their turn has advantage. Otherwise, the rider falls prone in an unoccupied space adjacent to the mount and the rider's speed becomes 0 until the start of their next turn.

TRAINED MOUNTS WITHOUT RIDERS

The GM decides how a trained mount without a rider acts. As a guideline, a trained mount takes the Dodge action if it receives no command from its rider while the rider is present. However, if the rider is incapacitated or absent, the mount acts on its own under the control of the GM. Without a rider to command them in combat, most mounts focus on running away or defending themselves.

BASILISK

Svirfneblin ranchers are among the rare folk to tame basilisks. The gnomes teach the monsters how to temper their sight into controlled degrees of severity. “Riding Basils,” as they’re called by the deep gnomes, make invaluable guardians on long underground journeys.

BASILISK MOUNT

Medium monstrosity, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 13 + PB (natural armor)

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS 3 times the rider’s character level or challenge rating

HIT POINTS 45 (7d8 + 14)

SPEED 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	8 (-1)	15 (+2)	2 (-4)	8 (-1)	7 (-2)

SAVING THROWS Con +2 + PB

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 9

LANGUAGES —

CHALLENGE 3 (700 XP)

Mounted. During a long rest, the basilisk can designate one creature that rode it within the last 10 days as its rider. The basilisk gains temporary hit points equal to 3 times the rider’s level or challenge rating after completing the long rest. The basilisk uses its rider’s proficiency bonus in place of its own proficiency bonus for AC, ability checks, attack rolls, saving throws, and the DC made to save against certain action effects.

Bedrock. Medium and smaller creatures can ride the basilisk. The basilisk’s rider has advantage on saving throws against being dismounted from the basilisk.

Heavy Sight. The basilisk can afflict supernatural effects on creatures it locks eyes with. If a hostile creature starts its turn within 30 feet of the basilisk, and the two of them can see each other, the creature’s movement speed is reduced by 5 feet.

A creature that isn’t surprised can avert its eyes at the start of its turn to avoid this effect, as well as the basilisk’s Hardening Gaze and Petrifying Glare actions. If it does so, the creature can’t see the basilisk or the rider un-



til the start of the creature’s next turn, when it can avert its eyes again. If it looks at the basilisk in the meantime, it must immediately make the save.

ACTIONS

Calcifying Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 + PB to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) piercing damage. The target must succeed on a DC 10 + PB Constitution saving throw or have its movement speed halved until the end of the basilisk’s next turn.

Hardening Glare. The basilisk locks eyes with a creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The target must make a DC 10 + PB Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the target suddenly feels stiff and is restrained until the end of the basilisk’s next turn.

Lesser Petrifying Gaze (1/Day). The basilisk locks eyes with a creature it can see within 30 feet of it. The creature must make a DC 10 + PB Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature visibly begins to turn to stone and is restrained. It must repeat the saving throw at the end of its next turn. On a success, the effect ends. On a failure, the creature is petrified for 1 hour or until freed by the *lesser restoration* spell or similar magic.

GIANT TOAD

Dangerous hunters prowl the swamplands on the backs of giant toads. Unlike their wild brethren, trained toads strike at their prey with long, powerful tongues and reel them in close. The victims are then left with three choices: get cut down by the hunter, eaten by the toad, or pulled dozens of feet into the air and left to fall to their demise.

GIANT TOAD MOUNT

Large mounted beast, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 11 + PB

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS 4 times the rider's character level or challenge rating

HIT POINTS 32 (5d10 + 5)

SPEED 25 ft., swim 35 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	2 (-4)	10 (+0)	3 (-4)

SAVING THROWS Con +1 + PB

SKILLS Athletics +2 + PB

SENSES darkvision 30 ft.,
passive Perception 10

LANGUAGES —

CHALLENGE
1 (200 XP)

Mounted. During a long rest, the toad can designate one creature that rode it within the last 10 days as its rider. The toad gains temporary hit points equal to 3 times the rider's level or challenge rating after completing the long rest. The toad uses its rider's proficiency bonus in place of its own proficiency bonus for AC, ability checks, attack rolls, saving throws, and the DC made to save against certain action effects.

Amphibious. The toad can breathe air and water.

Standing Leap. The toad's long jump is up to 25 feet and its high jump is up to 15 feet, with or without a running start.

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 + PB to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d10 + 2) piercing damage. If the target is restrained, the bite deals an additional 7 (2d6) poison damage.

Tongue Lash. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +2 + PB to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage, and the target is grappled (escape DC 10 + PB). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained. If the target is Medium or smaller, the toad can drag or carry the target while grappling it without any movement penalty.

Power Hop (2/Day). The toad leaps 40 feet into the air. The toad can release any creature it grapples at the peak of the jump, causing the creature to immediately plummet before the toad if the creature does not have a means of staying aloft.

The toad and its rider land safely anywhere within 40 feet of their initial starting point. Any creatures that occupy the space where the toad lands must succeed on a DC 10 + PB Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 16 (4d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage, is knocked prone, and becomes restrained underneath the toad. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage and is moved into an unoccupied space within 5 feet of the toad. A restrained creature can use its action to make a DC 10 + PB Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) check, ending the condition and entering an occupied space within 5 feet of the toad on a success. If the toad moves out of a creature's space, that creature is no longer restrained.



HIPPOGRIFF

Only the most determined flight enthusiasts seek out and domesticate hippogriffs. The rare, majestic creatures are easy to work with on the ground and in the sky, and make for faithful companions.

Hippogriff cavalry fly in tight groups, each mount taking advantage of the updrafts of coflyers to achieve breakneck speeds and death-defying stunts.

HIPPOGRIFF MOUNT

Large mounted beast, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 11 + PB

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS 4 times the rider's character level or challenge rating

HIT POINTS 19 (3d10 + 3)

SPEED 40 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	13 (+1)	13 (+1)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)

SAVING THROWS Dex +1 + PB

SKILLS Perception +1 + PB

SENSES passive Perception 11 + PB

LANGUAGES —

CHALLENGE 1 (200 XP)

Mounted. During a long rest, the hippogriff can designate one creature that rode it within the last 10 days as its rider. The hippogriff gains temporary hit points equal to 3 times the rider's level or challenge rating after completing the long rest. The hippogriff uses its rider's proficiency bonus in place of its own proficiency bonus for AC, ability checks, attack rolls, saving throws, and the DC made to save against certain action effects.

Tailwind. If the hippogriff starts its turn adjacent to any creature other than its rider, the hippogriff and all creatures adjacent to it gain a 10-foot bonus to movement speed until the start of the hippogriff's next turn.

Unbridled. The hippogriff is unaffected by nonmagical difficult terrain.

ACTIONS

Claw Swipe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 + PB to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (2d4 + 3) slashing damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 11 + PB Strength saving throw or drop one object it is holding.

Divebomb (3/Day). The hippogriff flies up to 60 feet in a straight line. This movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks. At the end of this movement, the hippogriff's rider can make a melee weapon attack. On a hit, the attack deals an extra 1d6 + 2 bludgeoning damage for every 10 feet the hippogriff moved (rounded down).

REACTIONS

Weave. When the hippogriff has to make a Dexterity saving throw, the rider can use its reaction to grant the hippogriff advantage on its save.

NIGHTMARE

A nightmare doesn't begin its life as a hell horse. These creatures are made with dark magic to serve powerful fiends as powerful steeds and status symbols.

The flaming hooves of a nightmare leave behind a trail of flames with each gallop, the cinders smouldering even as the nightmare disappears into the Ethereal Plane.



NIGHTMARE MOUNT

Large mounted fiend, neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 13 + PB (natural armor)

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS 3
times the rider's
character level or challenge rating

HIT POINTS 59 (7d10 + 21)

SPEED 60 ft., fly 90 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	13 (+1)	15 (+2)

SAVING THROWS Dex +2 + PB

SKILLS Athletics +4 + PB

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES fire

SENSES passive Perception 11

LANGUAGES understands Abyssal, Common, and Infernal but can't speak

CHALLENGE 3 (700 XP)

Mounted. During a long rest, the nightmare mount can designate one creature that rode it within the last 10 days as its rider. The nightmare mount gains temporary hit points equal to 3 times the rider's level or challenge rating after completing the long rest. The nightmare mount uses its rider's proficiency bonus in place of its own proficiency bonus for AC, ability checks, attack rolls, saving throws, and the DC made to save against certain action effects.

Confer Fire Resistance. While a rider is mounted on the nightmare, the rider gains resistance to fire damage.

Horsepower. The nightmare begins charging if it moves at least 20 feet in a straight line and continues charging until it stops moving forward. While charging, the nightmare ignores difficult terrain and leaves behind a trail of fire that scorches the area until the start of its next turn. A creature takes 1d8 fire damage when it enters the nightmare's wake for the first time on a turn or ends their turn there.

Illumination. The nightmare sheds bright light in a 10-foot radius and dim light for an additional 10 feet.

ACTIONS

Flaming Stomp. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 + PB to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) bludgeoning damage plus 3 (1d6) fire damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 12 + PB Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Blazing Charge (3/Day). The nightmare doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it moves out of an enemy's reach, and can move through spaces occupied by other creatures until the end of its turn. If the nightmare charges on the same turn, any creatures in the nightmare's way must make a DC 12* Strength saving throw or take 15 (2d10 + 4) fire damage and be knocked prone. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage isn't knocked prone.

Ethereal Stride. The nightmare, its rider, and up to three willing creatures within 5 feet of it magically enter the Ethereal Plane from the Material Plane, or vice versa.

OWLBEAR

The owlbear can adjust its plumage to make quick turns and graceful falls despite its incredible bulk. It seems built to strike fear into anyone who dares to exist on the same plane as it.

Those who choose an owlbear as a mount are aware that the monstrosity may turn on them at a moment's notice. Nonetheless, many still try their luck at hosting owlbear races, though few such events take place without casualties.

OWLBEAR MOUNT

Large monstrosity, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 13 + PB (natural armor)

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS 3 times the rider's character level or challenge rating

HIT POINTS 51 (6d10 + 18)

SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	12 (+1)	17 (+3)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

SAVING THROWS Str +5 + PB

SKILLS Perception +1 + PB

SENSES darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 11 + PB

LANGUAGES —

CHALLENGE 3 (700 XP)

Mounted. During a long rest, the owlbear can designate one creature that rode it within the last 10 days as its rider. The owlbear gains temporary hit points equal to 3 times the rider's level or challenge rating after completing the long rest. The owlbear uses its rider's proficiency bonus in place of its own proficiency bonus for AC, ability checks, attack rolls, saving throws, and the DC made to save against certain action effects.

Owl Down. The owlbear's long jump is up to 15 feet without a running start, and up to 30 feet with a running start. While falling, the owlbear's rate of descent is 60 feet per round.

ACTIONS

Paw Swipe. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 + PB to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 + PB Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Bear Hug. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 + PB to hit, reach 5 ft., one Medium or smaller creature. *Hit:* 16 (2d10 + 5) bludgeoning damage. The target is grappled (escape DC 13 + PB) and restrained until this grapple ends. The owlbear can grapple only one target at a time.

Monstrous Ferocity (1/Day). The owlbear flares its feathers to make itself look more fearsome for 1 minute. The rider is heavily obscured behind the owlbear's plumage. Any creature that targets the owlbear or its rider with an attack or a harmful spell that targets a single creature must first succeed on a DC 6 + PB Wisdom saving throw. On a failed save, the creature must choose a new target or lose the attack or spell.

REACTIONS

Bear Bulk. When the owlbear is hit with an attack, the rider can use their reaction to brace the owlbear for impact. The damage the owlbear takes from the attack is reduced by 1d10 + 3 + PB.



WARHORSE

Warhorses train alongside armies as proper soldiers. A warhorse's powerful hooves and awe-inspiring cries can change the outcome of a battle. They charge into the fray at high speeds and let nothing stand in their way.

FIND STEED VARIANT

The spirit summoned by the *find steed* spell can take the form of a warhorse mount over the standard warhorse, allowing the caster to utilize this creature's new features.

WARHORSE MOUNT

Large mounted beast, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 11 + PB

TEMPORARY HIT POINTS 4 times the rider's character level or challenge rating

HIT POINTS 19 (3d10 + 3)

SPEED 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	13 (+1)	2 (-4)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

SAVING THROWS Dex +1 + PB

SKILLS Athletics +4 + PB

SENSES passive Perception 11

LANGUAGES —

CHALLENGE 1 (200 XP)

Mounted. During a long rest, the horse can designate one creature that rode it within the last 10 days as its rider. The horse gains temporary hit points equal to 3 times the rider's level or challenge rating after completing the long rest. The horse uses its rider's proficiency bonus in place of its own proficiency bonus for AC, ability checks, attack rolls, saving throws, and the DC made to save against certain action effects.

Horsepower. The horse begins charging if it moves at least 15 feet in a straight line and continues charging until it stops moving forward. While charging, the horse's long jump is up to 30 feet and it ignores difficult terrain.

ACTIONS

Combat Stomp. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 + PB to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d4 + 4) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 12 + PB Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

Battle Neigh (1/Day). The horse lets out a mighty bellow. Allied creatures within 10 feet of the horse that can hear it gain 2d6 temporary hit points. Each enemy within 10 feet of the horse that can hear it must succeed on a DC 9 + PB Wisdom saving throw or be frightened of the horse until the end of the enemy's next turn.

War Charge (3/Day). The horse gains resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage, doesn't provoke opportunity attacks when it moves out of an enemy's reach, and can move through spaces occupied by other creatures until the end of its turn. If the horse charges on the same turn, each creature in the horse's way must make a DC 12 + PB Strength saving throw or take 13 (2d8 + 4) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage and isn't knocked prone.

MOUNTED CREATURE TAMING

Most mounts sold by breeders and merchants are trained and ready to ride, but making friends with a mount and training it yourself can be a big part of the fun. Wild creatures must first be tamed by an aspiring rider to become a trained mount.

In order to tame a mount, a rider must succeed on a Wisdom (Animal Handling) check with a DC equal to 13 + the creature's challenge rating. The "Taming Mounts" table below features a scale of consequences based on the result of the rider's Wisdom (Animal Handling) check. At the GM's discretion, a rider who feeds and cares for the animal has advantage on this check.

TAMING MOUNTS

<i>Distance from DC</i>	<i>Result</i>
-5 or lower	The mount is hostile towards the rider and attacks. The DC on the next check to tame the mount increases by 2.
-4 to -1	The mount attempts to fling the rider off its back. The rider must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone. The DC on the next check to tame the mount increases by 1.
0 (meets the DC)	The mount is temporarily trained for 8 hours. The rider must then attempt to tame the creature again.
+1 to +4	The mount is temporarily trained for 24 hours. The rider must then attempt to tame the creature again.
+5 or higher	The mount is permanently trained and loyal towards the rider.

RALLY AT RASHKAR

This desert encounter is optimized for four characters of 3rd or 4th level. Every year, the hamlet of Rashkar hosts a famous capture-the-flag rally for mounted riders. However, this year, a vengeful gang of undead riders torment the participants when they try to practice. As the characters pass through town, the people of Rashkar ask for their help.

Whether the characters choose to tackle the undead riders before or during the rally, they need to be ready to ride.

RASHKAR

Rashkar is a small, remote settlement known as the Diamond of the Desert. The hamlet is a crucial stop for travelers crossing the desert, the lone sliver of civilization for miles. Its red stone buildings rise no higher than one story, but the dark dirt roads running through Rashkar are notably cooler than the sands surrounding them.

The residents of Rashkar are few, and their businesses cater to travelers and promote the annual riding event. Folks come from distant towns to trade, connect with other riders, gamble, and take part in the Rashkar Rally.

POPULATION

Seventy people live in Rashkar, primarily orcs and hobgoblins. Rashkarians are cool-headed in conversation (if a little blunt) and don't take kindly to deception.

ARRIVING IN RASHKAR

The characters see Dallas tending an injured hobgoblin named Buckton and her horse on the outskirts of town. Right before they arrived, Buckton was attacked by a group of undead riders led by a mummy ruffian on a flaming horse.

Dallas tells the characters that this gang harasses anyone riding near town. She presumes they're entangled with Rashkar's annual rally happening tomorrow, but she's unsure of how to handle it. Everyone's safety is her top priority, and she plans to cancel the rally if she has to.

If the characters offer to help, Dallas eagerly covers their expenses at the Eat, Sleep, Leave Bed & Breakfast. She also promises to pay the characters 100 gp each if they can stop the undead rider threat.

EAT, SLEEP, LEAVE BED & BREAKFAST

This small, tidy inn is hosting the visitors who prefer the quiet atmosphere over the ruckus at the campsite in

the center of Rashkar. Chu'Ratha is visibly troubled by worries about tomorrow's rally, but dutifully tends to the characters' needs. If given the opportunity, he recalls the tragedy that took place at last year's rally.

RASHKAR NPCs

Character	Key Information
Dallas (she/her hobgoblin noble)	Current mayor of Rashkar. Worried about the undead riders hurting people in the rally.
Buckton (she/her hobgoblin)	Head of the Rashkar Ranch. Proud of her horses, but having trouble with an ornery owlbear
Chu'Ratha (he/him orc commoner)	Runs the Eat, Sleep, Leave Bed & Breakfast. Laments what happened at last year's rally
Tenn Drakes (she/her orc mummy)	Leader of the undead riders. Has been haunting riders since meeting her untimely end after last year's rally.

THE CURSE OF NASH AND TENN

Read or paraphrase the following boxed text (or [play this audio clip with music](#) or [without music](#)) when Chu'Ratha tells the characters about the tragedy:

"I know why the dead come," Chu'Ratha says, his voice like low thunder. "And only for the rally. Tenn. Nash. It's their curse. No one was faster. Nothing could beat them. Except...except death. Then the corsairs came...was it only last year? And they bet so much. They bet everything on their horse and rider.

"The corsairs never knew fear or defeat. Tenn and Nash taught them the meaning of both, heh. It wasn't even close.

"Well..." the orcish innkeeper looks down at his boots. "Turns out...the corsairs don't like to lose. A fortnight later, strangers came to town. I knew something was wrong. They were different. Assassins. I don't know what happened—I wasn't there. Did she put up a fight?"

"The stables caught fire. There was an explosion and...well, the assassins were all dead, but the corsairs got what they wanted. I couldn't save her. And now she haunts the rally. She won't let no one race. Never again." The orc takes a deep breath, something like pride burning in his eyes. "She'd never lose."

He notices your look.

"I see it in your face. You're wondering...did I love her? I would have."

If pressed for more details about Tenn and Nash, Chu'Ratha provides the following information:

- **Tenn Drakes** was Rashkar's previous mayor. She was a bombastic orc beast trader who made a lot of friends and more enemies.
- Tenn's faithful companion was a massive warhorse named Nash. Nash was the fastest ride in the desert.
- Tenn loved the Rashkar rallies and was the reigning champion until the tragedy.

Chu'Ratha is quietly relieved if the characters are still willing to help out Rashkar. He offers to talk to Buckton about letting the characters keep any horses they rent from the ranch if they're able to put Tenn's soul to rest without violently destroying her.

RASHKAR CENTER

The village center is converted into a lively camp with a wide assortment of visiting people and mounts preparing for the rally. Any goods or services that can't be found in Rashkar proper may appear here, with a steep markup.

The characters can learn about the rally and barter for supplies and mounts if any of them wish to enter. Any of the visitors can explain the rules of the rally (found below in "The Rally" section) in addition to these tips:

- **Keep your sights on the banner.** The rally is less about beating the competition than outlasting it.
- **Aim left when they move right.** It's important to think ahead of the current situation. Dashing towards the banner immediately might not be as successful as waiting for the banner to be dropped midway across the field.
- **It gets violent.** Riders are going to do everything they can to take the banner away from the current holder. It used to get deadly in previous years, and some new rules have been put in place, but this rally will still be rough.

VISITING NPCs

Character	Key Information
Lowtletti (she/her goblin)	A trinket trader. Loves to talk about her worldly travels with her giant frog mount .
Dindar (he/him svirfneblin)	A basilisk mount rancher. Takes great care with his flock around other people.
Rosskar (he/him human knight)	A hippogriff mount breeder. Excited to talk to other hippogriff enthusiasts.

If a character is looking to borrow or purchase mounts from Dindar or Rosskar, they must succeed on a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check. They can make the check with advantage if they appeal to the visitors' interests.

RASHKAR RANCH

Buckton shows the characters around her dusty but organized ranch, where she has over a dozen **warhorse mounts** available for rent or purchase. Renting a warhorse mount, including tack, costs 40 gp per day, and they can be purchased outright for 400 gp (though the characters may also be allowed to keep their mounts as a reward, as described in "Aftermath," below).

Buckton also has a rowdy **owlbear mount** in the back stable that she hasn't been able to tame yet. She's willing to give the owlbear away to whomever succeeds at taming the monstrosity, as long as she isn't blamed for any injuries they incur while doing so.

OUTSKIRTS

The visitors are wary of practicing for the rally in the dusty and cool outer reaches of Rashkar. Whenever a rider and mount moves within the outskirts of the village or on the rally field, the undead riders materialize 40 feet away and attack.

The undead riders consist of three **skeletons** atop ghostly **warhorse mounts**, and Tenn, an undead orc riding a **nightmare mount**. They fight relentlessly until all their foes are dismounted, or until the characters challenge Tenn to compete in the rally (see below).

Tenn carries a long whip, and wears chaps and a decomposing leather stetson. She uses the **mummy** statblock with the following changes:

- Tenn's Wisdom score is 16 (+3)
- Tenn's Rotting Fist action has been replaced by the following action, which she can use in place of Rotting Fist if she takes the Multiattack action:

Rotting Whip. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. **Hit:** 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage plus 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be cursed with mummy rot. The cursed target can't regain hit points, and its hit point maximum decreases by 10 (3d6) for every 24 hours that elapse. If the curse reduces the target's hit point maximum to 0, the target dies, and its body turns to dust. The curse lasts until removed by the *remove curse* spell or other magic.

The characters can attempt to negotiate with Tenn during combat. If they challenge her to compete in this year's rally, her demeanor changes: her posture straightens, and a fire ignites within her sunken eye sockets.

In a low, raspy tone, she tells the characters, "See you out on the field," and tips her decaying hat at them. The undead riders abruptly vanish.

THE RALLY

The field is a 60-foot-by-120-foot stretch of dark dirt. At the far end is a tattered 10-foot-tall banner depicting a purple worm. The undead riders normally descend upon any riders in this area, as detailed in the "Outskirts" section above.

If the undead riders do not interfere, all participants start lined up at one end of the field. The goal of the rally is to grab the banner and hold it up for 30 consecutive seconds while mounted.

If a participant holding the banner is knocked prone, stunned, or suddenly displaced from their mount, they must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw or drop the banner.

Rashkar rallies encourage conflict and strategic targeting in order to secure victory. A few rules were instituted this year to minimize casualties and maximize excitement:

1. Willingly leaving the field is a disqualification. If you are forced out of bounds, you must return to the field as soon as possible.
2. Flight is limited to 5 feet above the ground. Jumping higher than 5 feet is allowed, but you must land before too long.
3. No teleporting or shifting into another plane of existence.
4. Murdering or attacking with intent to kill is a disqualification and earns a ban from all future rallies.

If the characters challenged Tenn to compete, she arrives with a thunderous boom at the start of the second round, mounted on Nash at the center of the field. They attack aggressively, but follow the rules of the game as Tenn tries to claim the banner.

If Tenn herself hoists the banner, the rest of the undead riders (see the “Outskirts” section, above) appear. They ruthlessly attack anyone on the field (including Tenn and Nash) until the rally is over, and then vanish once more. If Tenn is destroyed before the end of the rally, the hellish flames erupt from the ground, causing the entire field to burn in a fire that lasts for one week and cannot be extinguished by any means. Nash’s cries echo throughout Rashkar while the field burns. The first time a creature enters the fire on a turn or starts its turn there, it takes 5 (1d10) fire damage.

If Tenn survives, the fire in her eyes burns bright white and her posture relaxes. She returns the banner to its starting position if she won, or she approaches the winner to shake their hand. If Chu’Ratha is nearby, they share a long, wordless stare before she tosses her hat over to him. Tenn then rides off on Nash into the Ethereal Plane.

AFTERMATH

The rally garners a big crowd of Rashkarians and visitors hanging on every moment of the event. If the rally stays under control, Dallas holds a ceremony for the winner on the field, surrounded by cheering fans. If the undead riders appear, most of the crowd flees. The winner will have to visit Dallas in the center of Rashkar if they want their rewards.

The prizes for winning the rally are:

- Two barrels of Rashkar sweet wine worth 20 gp each.
- A saddle embroidered with a purple worm carapace, adorned with ivory thorns and red and green ruffled drapes. This *saddle of Rashkar* is a common magic item. While the saddle is worn by a creature that runs on land, small lines of illusory spines emerge from the creature’s wake and fade into the ground, like shark fins carving through the ocean’s waves.
- A set of *horseshoes of speed*.

If Tenn survives the rally, Chu’Ratha and Buckton also gift the characters with any horses that they rented from Buckton’s stable.

MUSIC CREDIT: *Thunderbird Kevin MacLeod (incompetech.com)*

VOICE CREDIT: *Willy Abeel*

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UQAVIEL THE RECREANT

Sadie Lowry

*They call him “traitor.” Heretic. Apostate. Recreant.
But before that, they called him the Shard of Dawn.*

Uqaviel is a cunning celestial villain, fallen from the planes of light. Betrayed by a fellow archangel, he was cast out, deemed the great apostate of the heavens, and bound to the Material Plane for sins he did not commit. This article delves into Uqaviel’s history and multiple ways to run him as an effective villain, from facing the angel that betrayed him to witnessing how he severed the bonds between the Material Plane and the great celestial realms.

SHARD OF DAWN

How glorious he was in his height! A favored vassal of his god, Uqaviel ascended from planetar to archangel after millennia of devotion and was awarded the title “the Shard of Dawn.” The missions he undertook involved the great balancing of time, space, and gravity among the planes. He not only maintained the forces of balance, but also fought against fiendish hordes that sought to upheave the equilibrium of planar power. Material, celestial, and infernal planes, he balanced them all: he was a vessel of light striking against the forces of evil, ensuring that their dark rituals never completed the rise of darkness.

His favorite work was in the Material Plane. Under the hand of the Shard of Dawn, the worlds of the Material Plane, balanced on a delicate tapestry of woven magic, continued in their ever-circular dance. As he navigated the worlds around the sun and stars and ensured their continued day and night, Uqaviel took great joy in the artistry and splays of color in each transition, and he contemplated that beauty—the beauty of everything neatly balanced and arrayed in the fires of the dawn.

The dawn is, after all, the beautiful cusp where morning and night dance. A perfect balance.

BETRAYAL AND FALL

After what seemed an eternity of service, Uqaviel was betrayed by Anahita, an archangel of the brightest daylight. Known as the Sentinel Apricate, Anahita ensured the brightness and everfire of the sun, stoking the blaze under direction of her god. Before this great betrayal, she was the constancy of the noonday sun—all that it feeds and nurtures, and the brightest blaze it brings to heat the worlds of the Material Plane. But the highest daylight passes overhead so quickly. She was the brightest, and it was not *enough*.

Anahita, lured by promises of greater power and prestige, collaborated with devils who promised her all that Uqaviel had and more—the fires of his dawn, the light of stars in the darkness. If she would open the door for their assault, she would be so much more than the Sentinel Apricate. She would be poised to command the sun in its evercycle through dawn, day, and night. Sun, stars, and dawning fire—all hers.

Her betrayal left several solars and more planetars dead after a consuming assault on a holy building. She wielded the dawnfire—a stunning celestial blaze that left the cathedral in ashes. Uqaviel, known for his love of the dawnfire and framed for the sin, was left to take the blame for the slaughter. His protestations of innocence were ignored by his once-friends; with archdevil magic empowering each twisting word, Anahita spoke truth to the host’s holy ears, and Uqaviel could not escape judgment.

For this crime, Uqaviel was cast out and bound to the Material Plane, damned to repent for his actions for millions of millennia—the combined lifetimes of all the fallen celestials. Uqaviel knows Anahita is responsible for his downfall, but he has never found proof.

But unknown to everyone, including Anahita, devils keep meticulous records of their dealings. The evidence Uqaviel needs to prove his innocence lies buried in the infernal realms.

A RECREANT BORN

In his time roaming the Material Plane, Uqaviel has developed a seeping hatred for it—to him, it is a cage. He sees the dawning mornings in a muffle veil of their usual splendor and feels a grief that twists into loathsome vengeance. For the betrayal of Anahita and the celestials, Uqaviel hopes to sever the ties between the Material Plane and the celestial realms, creating a catastrophic unbalance that would destroy them both. In doing so, he would ruin the perfect balance he spent so long maintaining as punishment for his fall. See “A Severed World” below for more details about this sundering.

Yet Uqaviel’s motivations run deeper. While he strikes at the balance of the planes in his fury, this is an anger that washes over everything else. On a deeper level, unknown perhaps even to himself, Uqaviel seeks redemption in the eyes of his brethren and justice against Anahita. When playing Uqaviel, it’s helpful to keep his deeper motivations in mind. He is entrenched in rage, but the deepest part of him has a strong spark of goodness. It’s possible for the characters to reach that goodness and to stop his machinations through kindness rather than violence.

STORY

Uqaviel can be integrated into a campaign a number of ways—a long-term villain, a mysterious world-severer, a weakened ally. Below are several options, though two powerful celestials could influence a story in any number of ways.

- **Burgeoning Villainy.** The characters first encounter Uqaviel upon the broken steps of a desecrated temple; he has just been cast out and is weakened. He asks the party to aid him, claiming that an archdevil tore him from the heavens. They heal him, find him reagents for his rituals, and trust him. Over time, as the characters begin to sense the fury brewing inside of him and feel a darkness surrounding the rituals, they realize he is not what he appears—but do they confront him before celestial blood stains his hands?
- **Anahita’s Lies.** Anahita approaches the characters after they gain renown and tells them that a dangerous fallen archangel threatens the world in his fury. Calling them her holy warriors, she rewards them lavishly for helping her hunt down the traitor. Showered in treasures, statues, and the praise of the heavens, the characters must be observant as they prepare to face the Shard of Dawn, lest they unknowingly carry out Anahita’s final treachery.
- **Cracks in the World.** Neither archangel approaches the characters—instead, the party is on the hunt for Uqaviel before they ever learn his name. They are

approached by an arcane researcher who tells them the world grows out of balance, with minor flickers of planar disarray (see “A Severed World,” below) rearing to life. Something monumental echoes into the world, they whisper. As the characters chase the wild flares of power, they hear the name “Recreant” irreverently pass the lips of those who fear Uqaviel’s growing power. While Uqaviel is already dragging his claws through the world, the characters face a desperate race to learn his plans and stop them from unfolding.

It’s also possible to use Uqaviel as an ally from the start, by having him approach the party, reveal Anahita’s treachery, and beg their assistance in restoring him to the heavens. This omits the unfolding mystery and the tragic anger of the story, but it suits a campaign that already involves archdevils, as the characters will have to contend with the hordes of devils Anahita used to overthrow the celestial realms.

ENACTING THE RITUAL

This section contains one possible path for the campaign to follow, a path that establishes Uqaviel as a villain upfront and slowly reveals the truth of his past.

Left to his own devices, Uqaviel acts solely in pursuit of his mission: to complete a ritual that shatters the needlepoint upon which the balance of the universe hangs, severing the ties between planes. He knows each step well, as this is the ritual he once fought so hard to resist. He seeks sacred components to complete it, then performs it at dawn at the height of the world. Each of these steps can be run as an encounter or prolonged quest as the characters race to stop his efforts.

- **Obtaining the Scales.** Uqaviel seeks an ancient set of weighing scales from the crypt of a celestial judge.
- **Tempering the Metals.** The scales must be tempered in sacred water to prepare them for the ritual, so Uqaviel must gain access to celestial pools protected by devils allied with Anahita.
- **The Mantle and the Skies.** Uqaviel needs only two more items to complete his ritual: a pure gem of the earth for one scale and the blood of an untainted celestial for the other. The scale no longer recognizes his own blood as holy.

Once he has acquired all the components, Uqaviel ascends the highest peak in the Material Plane to complete the ritual, which takes 8 hours. Corrupted angels guard him during this ceremony, all of which fight until destroyed.

In this line of quests, Uqaviel embraces his role as the Recreant, hurling the planes into chaos if he succeeds. However, it is possible to reveal the truth of Uqaviel’s fall through each encounter, and thus Anahita’s betrayal toward the end.

- **The Weight of Judgment.** When Uqaviel touches the scales, they bellow out with an ancient judgment—and for this fallen angel, they do not lean to either side, but lie cryptically in the center. “How bitter,” he breathes to the artifact, “that you still see good in me when they do not. It does not matter. My choices are my own.” Characters can make a DC 18 Intelligence (Arcana, History, or Religion) check. On a success, they recall the history of the scales and know that they wouldn’t weigh equally if there were not a powerful force of good left inside Uqaviel.
- **Celestial Echoes.** When Uqaviel draws water from the pools of celestial realms, anyone within 60 feet of him is thrust into a flashing vision. The images come too quickly, flickering rapidfire through his glory, the bodies of dead celestials, the whispers of Uqaviel’s voice as he pleads his innocence, and Anahita—just one vision of her, smirking, triumph in her eyes as Uqaviel is cast out.
- **The Price.** The characters find Uqaviel weeping over the body of the celestial he slew for their blood. “I am as lost as she. As wretched. I seal my heresy upon this broken world and snap it at the spine I once ensured.” Here, they can plead with Uqaviel to reveal the truth as he cradles the slain angel to him. A successful DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) check gets him to open up, and if the characters caused Uqaviel to doubt in encounters before this, they have advantage on the check. He tells them everything: his history, Anahita’s treachery, his fall, and, more than anything, his overwhelming rage and grief.

A high-level party can challenge and defeat Anahita, though she has no end of followers that the characters must cut through before they can reach her. She secretly trades away small worlds and fragments of the celestial realms to her new infernal allies, making the imbalance all the more apparent, while placing the blame on Uqaviel’s treachery. This gives her a number of infernal underlings that strike out to protect her.

The characters don’t have to face Anahita directly, however. They can also delve into an infernal plane to find records of her dealings with the devils and expose her treachery to the heavens. There are many challenges and dangers in Hell, but presenting the contract to the divine council who cast Uqaviel out of the celestial realms ensures that Anahita faces justice and Uqaviel is redeemed as the great balancer of the skies. They can find her contract in the clutches of Thalrezon, the Withering Arbiter, who stands at the bench of bone and rot—will the characters make a deal with him, or will they wield steel against Thalrezon to obtain the truth?

A SEVERED WORLD

If Uqaviel’s ritual is completed, the planes careen wildly out of balance and the worlds of the Material Plane and the celestial realms are thrown into disarray. Wild megastorms surge over the continents, charged with magic. Long, sweltering days succumb to cold and endless nights, then flip back and forth with unnatural haste. Spirits and undead, with no gate to cross, haunt and scourge the lands. Dawn brings a burning celestial light one day, then the flames of a nearby infernal blaze the next. Fires roar too hot or barely kindle, the seas roar and retreat, and the forests wither one day before their roots and vines creep over cities the next.

Implement the following effects in your setting, either gradually or with alarming abruptness.

- **Broken Magic.** Planar magic struggles to work. Spells such as *contact other plane*, *plane shift*, and *planar binding* now have a 50% chance of failing. This increases to 75% after 30 days as the planes drift apart, then to 100% after 60 days.
- **Closed Doors.** No natural planar portals form. Any naturally occurring planar portals close.
- **Celestial and Infernal Heat.** Roll a d6 each morning. On a roll of 1 or 2, the Material Plane is too close to the celestial realms; any creature outdoors during the daylight hours is considered blinded from the too-radiant light until the sun sets. On a roll of 3 or 4, the Material Plane is too close to the infernal realms, and a creature gains a level of exhaustion for every 2 hours it spends in the daylight cast by the fires of hell. On a roll of 5 or 6, the Material Plane isn’t close to another plane and there are no additional effects.
- **Dwindling Magic.** At your discretion, any character that has a relation to a planar being, such as a cleric or a warlock of the Fiend, may have their powers reduced. For example, they could be unable to contact their deity or patron, or the damage or duration of their spells could be halved.

Once severed, the world can be healed again. If the characters prove Uqaviel’s innocence and he’s reinstated in his former role, his first task is to undo his ritual and restore balance to the planes. The characters could also search for a higher power to restore balance, or you can come up with another quest they must undertake to reestablish planar balance.

Uqaviel assists or works against the party depending on the relationship they have built with him. Alternatively, if the party has a relationship with Anahita, she might help them hunt Uqaviel once his ritual is complete, sealing his place in history as the Recreant.

HALLOWED DOSSIER

This section contains stat blocks for Uqaviel and Anahita, as well as tactics for running each of them effectively.

UQAVIEL

Uqaviel is a master of controlling the battlefield—and is at an advantage in an arena with level earth and open sky. He begins combat by disabling the most obvious melee threat with his *Chakram of the Firmament* and the most obvious ranged threat with his *Chakram of the*

Mantle. Throughout a fight, he either strategically places his chakrams to keep scattered opponents incapacitated, or devastates grouped foes with Dawn's Fury.

In his exile, Uqaviel has made only a few trusted allies out of other celestials spurned by the heavens. He refuses to ally himself with fiends or other dark forces. If he has not completed his ritual, Uqaviel escapes as quickly as possible (by teleporting or flying away) when a fight is not going in his favor. If his ritual is successfully completed, Uqaviel fights to the death unless his opponents convince him that it's not too late for him to surrender and be restored to his former glory.



UQAVIEL

Large celestial, lawful neutral

ARMOR CLASS 21 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 243 (18d10 + 144)

SPEED 50 ft., fly 150 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26 (+8)	22 (+6)	26 (+8)	25 (+7)	26 (+8)	30 (+10)

SAVING THROWS Str +15, Int +14, Wis +15, Cha +17

SKILLS Insight +15, Perception +15

DAMAGE RESISTANCES radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES fire, necrotic, poison

CONDITION IMMUNITIES charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

SENSES truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 25

LANGUAGES all, telepathy 120 ft.

CHALLENGE 23 (50,000 XP)

Dawnfire. Uqaviel's weapon attacks are magical. When Uqaviel hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 8d8 fire damage (included in the attack). Fire damage dealt by Uqaviel's attacks ignores resistance to fire damage.

Divine Awareness. Uqaviel knows if he hears a lie.

Innate Spellcasting. Uqaviel's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 25). He can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect evil and good*, *invisibility* (self only)

3/day each: *blade barrier*, *dispel evil and good*, *resurrection*

1/day each: *commune*, *control weather*

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Uqaviel fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. Uqaviel has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Uqaviel makes two attacks: one with each of his different chakram attacks.

Chakram of the Firmament. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (4d6 + 8) slashing damage plus 36 (8d8) fire damage. The target must succeed on a DC 23 Dexterity saving

throw or be knocked 60 feet in the air. Any target without a flying speed falls at the end of its next turn, taking 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage from the fall and landing prone.

Chakram of the Mantle. *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (4d6 + 8) slashing damage plus 36 (8d8) fire damage. The target must succeed on a DC 23 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone and stunned until the end of its next turn.

Flying Chakram. Uqaviel commands one of his chakrams to hover magically in an unoccupied space within 5 feet of him. If Uqaviel can see the chakram, he can mentally command it as a bonus action to fly up to 50 feet and either make one attack against a target or return to Uqaviel's hand. If the hovering weapon is targeted by any effect, Uqaviel is considered to be holding it. The chakram falls if Uqaviel dies.

Burning Touch (4/Day). Uqaviel touches another creature within 5 feet of him. The target must make a DC 23 Constitution saving throw. On a failure, the creature takes 36 (8d8) fire damage and is blinded, deafened, or poisoned (Uqaviel's choice). On a success, the creature takes half as much damage and is not inflicted with a condition.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Uqaviel can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Uqaviel regains spent legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Teleport. Uqaviel magically teleports, along with any equipment he is wearing or carrying, up to 120 feet to an unoccupied space he can see.

Searing Burst (Costs 2 Actions). Uqaviel emits divine energy. Each creature of his choice within 10 feet of him must make a DC 23 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) fire damage plus 14 (4d6) radiant damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

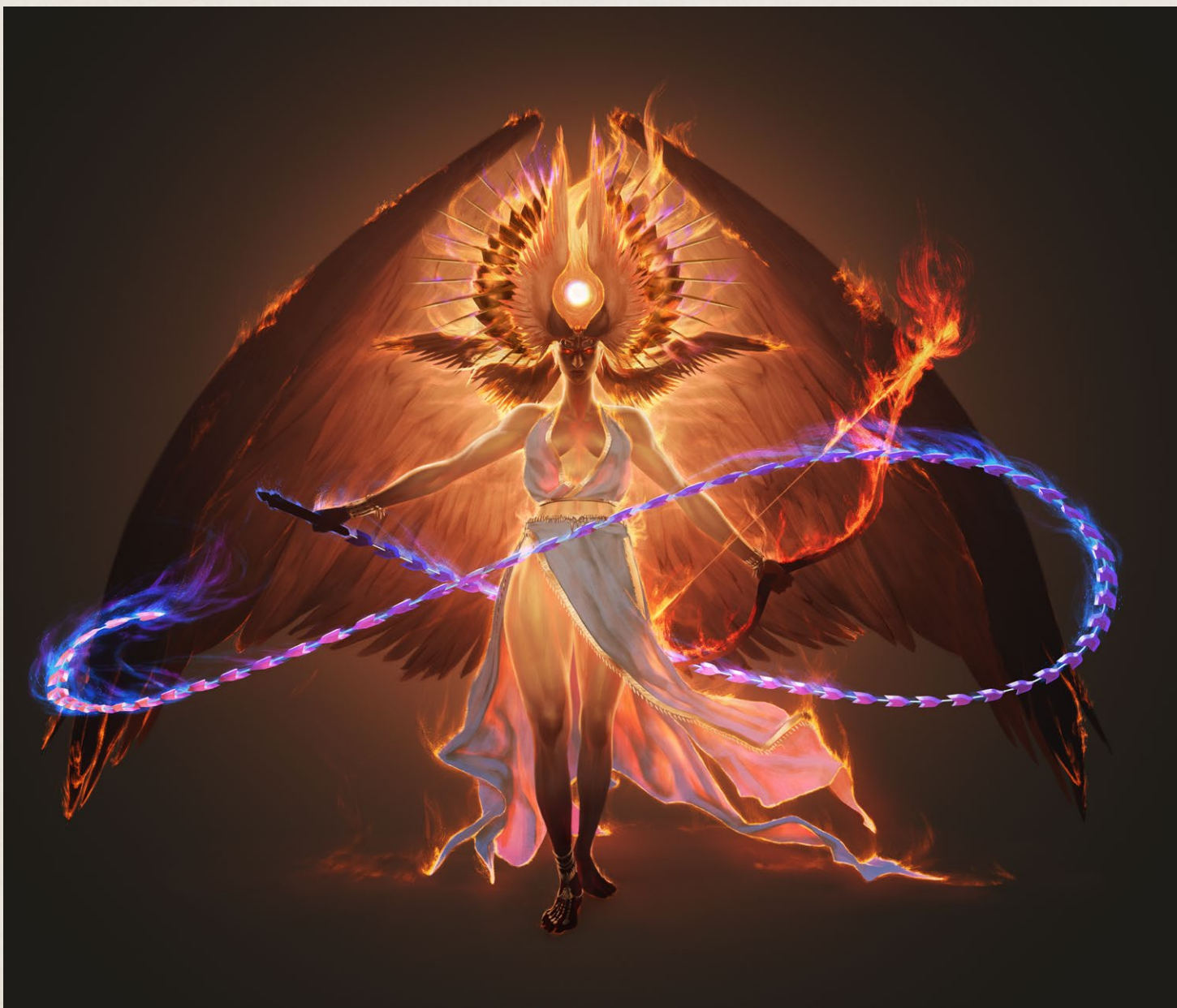
Dawn's Fury (Costs 3 Actions). Uqaviel drives both his chakrams into the ground. All creatures within 30 feet of the impact point must make a DC 23 Constitution saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 22 (4d10) force damage and is pulled in a straight line toward the impact point, ending in an unoccupied space as close to the impact point as possible, then is thrown 60 feet into the air. Any creature without a flying speed falls at the end of its next turn, taking 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage from the fall and landing prone. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage and is not thrown into the air. Uqaviel must be holding both of his chakrams to take this action.

ANAHITA

Anahita is most effective at range, and she avoids engaging enemies on unfavorable terrain. If she picks her arena, it has a high ground she can control; if taken unaware, she immediately seizes the highest point. She opens combat with a Blinding Arrow to disable her foes and strikes as many enemies as possible with a Piercing or Bursting Arrow. As the fight continues, she uses legendary actions

to stay out of reach and weakens pressing threats with Blinding Gaze or Enervating Arrow.

If she's acting as a holy archangel, Anahita could be accompanied by devas or a planetar. If there's no need for deception, she could have several erinyes or horned devils at her service. When it's clear that Anahita can't win an encounter, she attempts to teleport away and turns invisible to flee. However, if escape isn't an option, the treacherous archangel is not above striking a deal, promising wealth and power to foes willing to turn to her side.



ANAHITA

Large celestial, lawful evil

ARMOR CLASS 21 (natural armor)

HIT POINTS 245 (20d10 + 140)

SPEED 50 ft., fly 150 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22 (+6)	27 (+8)	25 (+7)	26 (+8)	25 (+7)	30 (+10)

SAVING THROWS Dex +15, Int +15, Wis +16, Cha +17

SKILLS Deception +17, Perception +14

DAMAGE RESISTANCES bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

DAMAGE IMMUNITIES necrotic, poison, radiant

CONDITION IMMUNITIES blinded, charmed, exhaustion, frightened, poisoned

SENSES truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 24

LANGUAGES all, telepathy 120 ft.

CHALLENGE 24 (62,000 XP)

Angelic Weapons. Anahita's weapon attacks are magical. When Anahita hits with any weapon, the weapon deals an extra 6d8 radiant damage (included in the attack).

Divine Awareness. Anahita knows if she hears a lie.

Holy Shots. Whenever Anahita fires an arrow, she can enhance it with one of the following shots. She can only use one shot per attack.

Blinding Arrow. A creature hit by the arrow and all other creatures within 10 feet of the target must succeed on a DC 25 Constitution saving throw or be blinded for 1 minute. An affected creature can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Bursting Arrow. Immediately after the arrow hits the target, all other creatures within 10 feet of the target take 18 (4d8) radiant damage.

Enervating Arrow. A creature hit by the arrow must succeed on a DC 25 Wisdom saving throw or the damage dealt by its weapon attacks is halved. The target can repeat this saving throw at the end of its turns, ending the effect on a success.

Piercing Arrow. Anahita does not make an attack roll when she fires this arrow. Instead, the arrow shoots forward in a line, which is 5 feet wide and 60 feet long, before disappearing. The arrow passes harmlessly

through objects, ignoring cover. Each creature in the line must make a DC 23 Dexterity saving throw, taking damage as if it were hit by the arrow on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

Innate Spellcasting. Anahita's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 25). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect evil and good*, *invisibility (self only)*

3/day each: *blade barrier*, *dispel evil and good*, *resurrection*

1/day each: *commune*, *control weather*

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If Anahita fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

Magic Resistance. Anahita has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Anahita makes two attacks, each of which can be a chain whip or longbow attack.

Chain Whip. Melee Weapon Attack: +15 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 22 (4d6 + 8) slashing damage plus 27 (6d8) radiant damage and the target is grappled (escape DC 21). Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained. On each of her turns while the target is restrained, Anahita can use her action to deal 22 (4d6 + 8) slashing damage plus 27 (6d8) radiant damage to the target automatically. The target is no longer restrained if Anahita uses her action to attack another target.

Incandescent Longbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +15 to hit, range 150/600 ft., one target. Hit: 18 (3d6 + 8) piercing damage plus 27 (6d8) radiant damage.

Healing Touch (4/Day). Anahita touches another creature. The target magically regains 40 (8d8 + 4) hit points and is freed from any curse, disease, poison, blindness, or deafness.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Anahita can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Anahita regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

Teleport. Anahita magically teleports, along with any equipment she is wearing or carrying, up to 120 feet to an unoccupied space she can see.

Chain Whip. Anahita makes one chain whip attack.

Blinding Gaze (Costs 3 Actions). Anahita targets one creature she can see within 30 feet of her. If the target can see her, it must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be blinded until magic such as the *lesser restoration* spell removes the condition.



LEON BARILLARO is a game and narrative designer living in the New York/New Jersey area. They work in tabletop RPGs, video games, and immersive theatre. You can catch more of them by following them on Twitter (@barilleon) or on their website: barilleon.com.



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